




# [locked/private] I didn't go see her on her birthday



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**MOOD:** None. Or other.

**MUSIC:** Maddy Prior - When I Was On Horseback

XM has this great radio station, *The Village* which I persist in imaging in terms of *The Prisoner*. Really it's American, English, and Irish folk music, though their definition of folk is exceptionally broad.

On September 30th, I didn't go out to Virginia. It was her birthday, and you just don't give the It that kind of traction. On her. On me.

So instead I went out yesterday and stayed overnight in one of the staff crash rooms, intending to see her again this morning. I brought brownies. They were bittersweet-chocolate/chipotle brownies, and yes, oh internets, the slash is intentional. These things were that much sex.

The thing was, I was so upset and distracted and full of fret that when I started baking the brownies I didn't realize I was sort-of-out of a lot of things that go into brownies. (My favorite brownie recipe this week is Nick Malgieri's "[Supernatural Brownies](https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A//splendidtable.publicradio.org/recipes/dessert_supernatural.html)" ([https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A//splendidtable.publicradio.org/recipes/dessert\\_supernatural.html](https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A//splendidtable.publicradio.org/recipes/dessert_supernatural.html)), and that was what I meant to use for a base.

But somebody on my flist was talking about making ancho-vanilla extract to use in brownies, and I got inspired....)

Except the oven is hot, and the bowls are set out, and the pan is greased, and I realize that I only have three eggs and 4.5 ounces of bitter chocolate, no bittersweet or semisweet at all.

Reader, I improvised.

4.5 ounces bitter chocolate (I used [Ghirardelli](https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A//www.ghirardelli.com/products/bars_unsweetened.aspx) ([https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A//www.ghirardelli.com/products/bars\\_unsweetened.aspx](https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A//www.ghirardelli.com/products/bars_unsweetened.aspx)))

this time, because I had gotten a ton of it on sale)  
2 sticks unsalted butter  
3 tbsp vegetable oil  
3/4 cup of cocoa powder (I used SaCo Premium  
(<https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A//www.sacofoods.com/premiumcocoa.html>),)  
3/4 tsp kosher salt  
3 eggs  
1/3 cup plain whole-milk yogurt  
1 cup flour  
1 cup vanilla sugar  
1 cup brown sugar, packed lightly  
1 tbsp vanilla extract (I've started making my own, actually, because it dawned on me that the way I go through the stuff the easiest thing to do was to invest in a bottle of white rum and a fistful of vanilla beans)  
1 tsp chipotle powder  
1/4 tsp cinnamon

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Grease (Oh, come on. With this much fat already in the brownies? Coals to Scranton.) a 9x13x2" pan and line it with parchment.

*About now, XM started singing in Arlo Guthrie's voice about oranges rotting in the creosote dumps.*

Put the butter, chocolate, cocoa, and oil in one microwave-safe bowl. Put that in the microwave and nuke until it's mostly melted, checking it every minute. If you burn the last chocolate in the house you will be sad.

When it is mostly runny mix it together and let it stand to finish melting from its own heat.

*Juan and Rosarita are riding that big airplane, which is a story that never ends well.*

While it is nuking, whisk the eggs, salt, vanilla, spices, and yogurt together. Add the sugars and the flour and whisk it together into something that looks like it would make pretty awesome blondies, if it came right down to it.

Pour the melted chocolate into the eggs and flour mixture slowly, mixing as you go. When you have a runny, greasy thing, pour it into the baking pan and spread it out, then put it in the oven.

*"Both sides of the river, we died just the same." I fail to understand why anybody would make box brownies, when the real deal takes about the length of one folk song to mix together, and there's nothing complicated to do.*

Bake for between 35-45 minutes, or until it is done. Does anybody *actually* do that thing with the cooling on a rack, turning out, trimming off the edges and so forth? Because the edges are the best part, and warm brownies are *warm cookies*, aren't they? And you have to *test* them.

#### **Failure modes:**

Brownies are crispy and black: your oven is too hot or you left them in too long (mine were done at 35 minutes on the dot.)

Brownies are dry: You panicked at the sight of all that fat, didn't you? ...Yeah, you did. They're *brownies*, they're not *healthy*.

Brownies are gooey: you couldn't wait an extra five minutes until the skewer came out clean?

...I just realized, I wrote this like anybody was ever going to read it.

Is this the healing process?

*Wasn't I pretty when I entered Cork City  
And met with my downfall on the fourteenth of May.*

Anyway, I got the brownies out to Arkham mostly unconsumed (go me) and gave them to William, which is the drill. I surrendered my electronics while William checked the brownies for tiny files and brought them around to her room, and I went in to the booth so we could talk face to face.

She was spinning. With a wooden spindle and a long hank of what must have been dyed brushed sheep's wool, which was wound through a sort of bracelet thing on her right wrist. Spinning yarn, like Sleeping Beauty.

She must have been thinking the same thing, because she looked

up and said "Are you my Prince Charming?"

But it was *her* talking, and not the It. The It--it doesn't smile that way, a little hopeful, like wondering if you're going to accept the overture. She was *playing*.

"Maybe," I said. "At least, you would not believe the rosebush out front--"

And just like that, we were off. Old times, and she told me that if she continued to make improvements, Casey was going to let her have a crochet hook. She showed me what she called her yarn stash and sent some of it around with William for me to pet and admire. She said she'd make me a sweater once she figured out how. "It's slow learning from books."

I should have let it go there. I know, I know. I *know* to stop on a positive. I should have left that night and forgotten about the next morning. But I'd already made the arrangements, you see.

When I got up the next morning, Dr. Casey was waiting for me. He told me that when she'd gotten up that morning, she'd asked William for her spindle. And then she'd broken it and tried to jab the shattered end into her throat.

"I think it's best you don't see her," he said. "I don't want to reward the behavior."

I left her other birthday present with him, though. For when he thinks she should have it. It's a pair of slippers Nikki helped me pick out. They're silk, and they're embroidered with the most amazing phoenixes.

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This looks like a  
good idea.

...

This.

...

Little guy's not  
bad.

Gotta teach RHex  
to smear.

